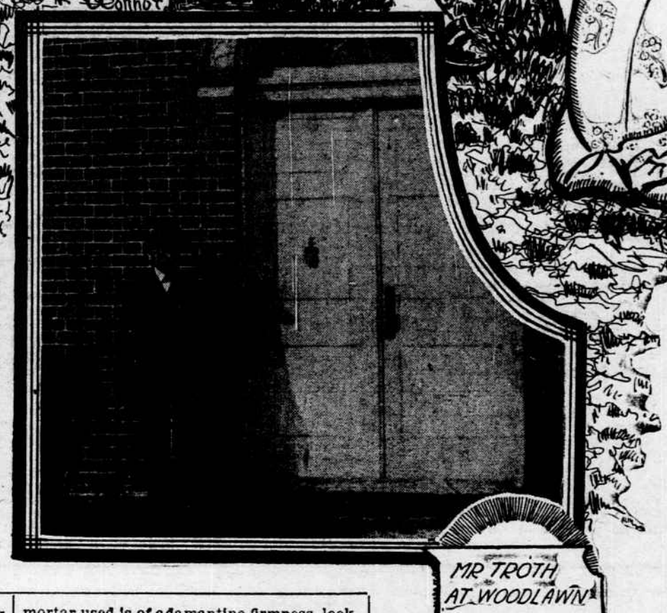
Historic Woodlawn Mansion

REAR VIEW of MANSION.

The EAST FRONT

PRESENT INHABITANTS of WOODLAWN

FROM WEST GATE of MOUNT VERNON—"OLD MAN HAMMOND"



MR TROTH AT WOODLAWN

THERE are two parts to Mount Vernon. The first is that which includes the mansion, tombs and appurtenant grounds under control of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association. The second includes the remainder of the great tract of 8,000 acres of which Washington died possessed. Sold by the successors of George Washington, the majestic estate is now divided into numerous farms. A man may ride a day over the roads and lanes of what, at Washington's death, was Mount Vernon, but which now lies outside the inclosed and preserved Mount Vernon.

From the point where one leaves the electric cars at the east gate of Mount Vernon a narrow, yellow road leads northwest. On the left is a high fence and a line of cedars through which may be had glimpses of the tilled fields of Mount Vernon at the rear of the mansion. On the right are old fields with occasional oaks and patches of pine. A few rods from the gate the road climbs a steep hill, from the summit of which may be had a long view ahead. On the left, as far as the eye sees, continue the Mount Vernon fields just now planted in corn and grass. Here and there, nailed to a tree inside the wire fence on the left of the road, is this rather inhospitable sign:

> Mount Vernon.
> No Trespassing.
> Persons found trespassing on these grounds will be prosecuted according to law.
> Mount Vernon Ladies' Association.

On the right of the road, as one goes forward, the old fields merge into scrub pine, this into thin pine about twenty years old, this into tall, dense pineland, and this into hard woods. At the north end of the inclosed grounds the road turns sharply to the southwest. Mount Vernon continues on the left, but the part now on view is upgrown in pines and oaks at least half a century old. This road brings the traveler to the west gate of Mount Vernon home grounds. In the days of Washington this was the main gate.

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At the west gate the road turns abruptly to the west and leads through a thick, but rather recent growth of woodland. At this turn in the road The Star reporter met the old colored man whose picture is shown here. His name is Hammond, and the reporter caught it as Eben Hammond. He has lived in the neighborhood of Mount Vernon for more than sixty years, and for many years has been employed in the grounds about the mansion. At present he is caretaker of the tomb. He knew the people who inhabited Mount Vernon before it became the property of the Ladies' Association; knew Jane Washington, widow of John A. Washington, and her son, John Augustine Washington, the last Washington of Mount Vernon, and who was killed in the confederate service.

As one proceeds west through this woodland road, a little traveled way branches to the left. This leads to Paradise, the home of J. H. Kuehling. It is a pretty place, buried in deep woods, through which vistas have been cleared, out of which, with a glass, may be seen Woodlawn Mansion to the west and the bluff of Belvoir to the south. Regaining the main road, the traveler emerges upon a broad stretch of nearly level land. The fields are fertile and well tilled. Cedars give a characteristic touch to the landscape, marking the present fence lines and also the lines where fences ran many years ago.

To the north the view is unobstructed. To the west, two miles away, there is a ridge, and in a big clearing stands Woodlawn, one of the historic homes of America. To the south the eye may trace the blue and purple woods covering the peninsula between Dogue and Pohick creeks, near the Potomac end of which moulder the ruins of Belvoir and the graves of the first of the Fairfax family in Virginia. To the southwest may be seen the high land on which Pohick Church, the church of Lawrence Washington, George Washington, George Mason of Gunston, the Fairfaxes and other colonial dignitaries, stands.

Crossing the broad plain the traveler enters the Alexandria turnpike at a pretty country place shaded by maples, oaks and pines, called Engleside, owned by Courtland Lukins. Out on the great and ancient pike that leads from Alexandria to Occoquan and beyond the course is south by a little west and a mile of travel brings you opposite Woodlawn. The fine old house stands on the summit of a ridge a quarter of a mile to the right of the pike. Turning in, and climbing the hill, you stand before one of the best examples of early eighteenth century architecture in Virginia. It was the home of Lawrence Lewis, son of Betty Washington and Fielding Lewis, and the husband of Nellie Custis, a beloved character in American history. Woodlawn is vacant now but for the presence of a caretaker.

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Mrs. Annie Lewis Kelley, a descendant of the first master of Woodlawn, in a late article thus describes the house:

"Woodlawn mansion has a splendid frontage and is of grand proportions. As first seen on the approach from Mount Vernon it presents an imposing appearance. Its harmony of outline and coloring is readily appreciated by the artistic eye. A beautiful park, laid out in walk and square and terrace, environs the house. A well-kept driveway circles through the park, approaching in a slightly rising curve the rear door of the house, through which visitors enter and are welcomed. A lofty and ample hall passes directly through the center of the mansion and thence out of the large, old-fashioned double front doors onto a beautiful and classic old portico. This portico is supported by six large white pillars of Doric design, which gleam out in the distance as fair and white as marble, contributing an enchanting feature to the quiet beauty of the whole.

"Maryland is seen in the distance, directly in front, a line of ethereal blue, between which, however, is the prominent site of Mount Vernon, by which sweeps the broad and beautiful Potomac with a solemn, silent grandeur peculiarly its own, bearing its mighty waters ever onward to the sea. Vessels plying up and down its channel are plainly seen from the outlook. Belvoir, the home of the Fairfaxes, and the large tract of forest land embraced in that old estate, together with Velvoir bay, can be seen on the extreme right. The yellow country road below, with its sinuous windings, is the same that a century and a half ago the father of his country, on his faithful charger, traveled over so often on his way to Pohick Church to attend divine services.

"There is a tradition that the plans for the construction of Woodlawn mansion were made by Gen. Washington. This, however, has been a disputed statement, his death occurring four years before the ground was broken for its foundation. It is possible, of course, that such plans may have been found among his papers after death.

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"Woodlawn is built of brick of an unusual size and hardness. They are laid after the old Flemish pattern. The builders of that period often used that style, which was then considered as nearly perfect as was known to the mason's art. The mortar used is of adamantine firmness, looking as fresh as when applied, and showing plainly the marks of the trowel. The interior finish and styles are much the counterpart of all colonial mansions, English architecture predominating. The ceilings are high and the cornices are of exquisite hand-wrought designs. The woodpanel finish around the doors and windowns is a distinctive feature. The main stairway ascending from the spacious hall is of solid and durable but very graceful workmanship. The rooms are large, each containing a deep fireplace surmounted by hardwood mantels, saving the two in the parlor and dining room. These are of fine Carara marble. The main house is two stories and a half high, with a splendid cellar running under the entire building. This cellar is cut off into rooms corresponding with the floor above, each room having a large fireplace. In one room is found an old well of considerable depth. When and why put there is not known. It was probably a wine vat. One quaint survival of the noted original owners of Woodlawn is the primitive mode of fastening the large front doors. Two strong iron brackets are fixed on either side of the heavy door frames, through which is laid a stout wooden bar extending across the doors.

"A testimonial of the age of Woodlawn may be seen on a pane of glass in one of the windows of the parlor. Thereon is written, with his own diamond ring perhaps, the name of Lawrence Lewis, with the date 1809."

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At the rear of Woodlawn mansion is a grove of oaks and pines. A few of these are original forest trees, and the age of the oaks is computed at two hundred years. In Washington's time the site of Woodlawn was heavy forest, but Lawrence Lewis made the clearing around the house, and at the rear there was a lawn of five acres with a forest tree left standing here and there. Walks hedged with box were laid out and much of this old box survives.

A few years ago Woodlawn was bought by Paul Kester, the dramatist. He made it his home till last spring, when he sold the property to Miss Elizabeth Sharp of New Jersey. One of the neighbors told The Star man that Miss Sharp lives at Orange, and another that she lives at Princeton. It is a guess that the lady is descended from the Sharp family of Maryland which gave to the old line state Gov. Sharp, a contemporary of Dinwiddie of Virginia and a friend of Washington in the French and Indian war period.

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Wandering through the Woodlawn grounds the reporter met an elderly man, a type of the old-school gentleman. His name, Jacob M. Troth. He lives on the farm adjoining Woodlawn on the south—Grand View. He is the son of a former owner of Woodlawn. He told the reporter that in 1848 Chalkley Gillingham bought Woodlawn and the 2,000 acres of forest surrounding it from Lorenzo Lewis, son of Lawrence Lewis and Nellie Custis. Very soon after Jacob M. Troth, the elder, became associated with Gillingham in the ownership of the estate, these two men in 1847 having established a saw and grist mill on Accotink run and founded the village of Accotink, a mile to the southwest of Woodlawn. They were New Jersey Quakers, and they brought down into Virginia a colony of the sect. Mr. Troth, the younger, lives on what was a part of Woodlawn, and descendants of the pioneer Friends are settled all over the Washington estate and the adjacent lands of the Fairfaxes and Masons. The Friends' meeting house and burial ground are within pistol shot of Woodlawn.

The mill and distillery of George Washington stood on Dogue run, half a mile eastward of Woodlawn. There is a tradition that Washington visited the mill and distillery on the day he contracted his fatal cold. According to Washington's diary, December 11, 1799, was windy and rainy, and at night there was a ring about the moon. December 12 was cloudy and threatening. In the morning of that day Washington wrote a letter to Alexander Hamilton approving a plan which Hamilton had submitted to the Secretary of War for the erection of a national military academy. He concluded the letter at 10 o'clock, called for his saddle horse and started off to visit distant points on his farm.

It was his daily custom to make a tour of the estate. About noon that day snow began to fall. Snow turned to hail and this to a cold rain. It was 3 o'clock in the afternoon when Washington returned to his house. Tobias Lear, Washington's private secretary, says the general was wet and cold, but that he went to dinner without changing his clothes.

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The next morning, December 13, the snow lay three inches deep, and Washington remained indoors. He suffered with cold and sore throat, contracted the day before. In the afternoon he walked out into the grounds in front of the house and marked several trees which he wished cut down. Between 2 and 3 o'clock the morning of December 14 Washington awakened Mrs. Washington, telling her he was suffering with his throat. At dawn he was bled by Mr. Rawlins, his overseer, and in the forenoon came Drs. Craik, Dick and Brown. At 10 o'clock on the night of December 14 the great Washington died. The site of the mill and distillery are of curious interest because of the circumstance that they were visited by Washington the last time he set foot outside of the home grounds.

The mill was bought by one of the Gillingham-Troth colony. In 1857 it was torn down and its stones used in the foundation of the house of Eden Walton. The place is called Walnut Hill, and is occupied by descendants of Walton. It can be clearly seen from Woodlawn and Grand View. The wife of Mr. Troth, the younger, was a daughter of Eden Walton. Mr. Troth is president of the Virginia Peace Society and a member of the International Peace Society. Among some of the things he treasures are relics of Washington and of the Woodlawn of Lewis times.

AMERICA SHOWS HOW NATIONAL BEAUTY SPOTS MAY BE SAVED

BY CANON RAWNSLEY

(Author of "Memories of the Tennysons," &c.).

THE feeling for scenery as having a message for the soul as well as for the eye is growing slowly among the people. Insensibly the teachings of Wordsworth and of John Ruskin are becoming accepted. Slowly, too, but surely, the eyes of the people are becoming taught to care for the changes on earth and in heaven that every day of sunlight and cloud works upon the landscape. It is true that immured in the brick-built Babylons of our industrial cities the hearts of many have ceased to sigh for the lanes and commons, the woods and blessed fields of their childhood. But holidays are now more frequent and holiday rambles better arranged, and even the dwellers in our city slums, where "sorrow is barricaded evermore within the walls of cities," get out now and again to the countryside, while the better-class artisan, when he goes off for his annual jaunt, goes now with keener determination than of old to see all that is to be seen.

The battle of eyes versus no eyes is beginning to be fought in our elementary schools, and such movements as foster the "bird and tree day" competitions, the naturalist ramblers' societies and field clubs are gradually bringing it about that not only rural but industrial city life shall enter more than of old into the pleasures of the scenery and wild bird and flower life of their native land.

America is not one whit behind the old mother country in this matter. When we determined some years ago to start the national trust for the preservation of places of historic interest and natural beauty, it was to America we turned for help and guidance. America that has done so much to preserve for its nation large open tracts of country where nature will never fear the rash assault of man. There had been formed in Massachusetts in 1891 a corporation entitled the Public Reservation Trust. In 1893 this body obtained statutory powers and was created a permanent park commission. Our national trust articles of association are founded on their model. To America also we have gone for help in the matter of interesting our youngsters in bird and free life, and bird and arbor day, which is becoming an institution with us, owes its inception to the need which our American cousins were the first to realize, that an educated nation is a nation that has learnt the use of its eyes, as well as of its head and its hands.

Side by side with this encouraging of the people to use their eyes we have such societies as the national trust for places of historic interest and natural beauty constantly reminding us that this or that beauty spot or historic building or site is in jeopardy, and the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings from time to time calls our attention to some new act of vandalism that is about to be perpetrated in the name of progress.

But deeper than all the aesthetic notions that are impelling us to protest against the desecration of historic site or building or the destruction of natural beauty is the feeling that the assets of national greatness we have in noble abundance are indeed factors that make up the patriotic mind. The poet wrote:

> "Breathes there the man with soul so dead
> Who never to himself hath said
> This is my own, my native land—
> Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned
> As home his footsteps he hath turned
> From wandering on a foreign strand!"

And the answer must be that unless we can preserve the beauty and the association of a noble past to help the present the people whose sense of beauty is awakening, will cease to so greatly care for the land that we have vulgarized and robbed of its vital powers to "kindle and restrain," and will find other Edens, other semi-paradises set in other seas, to which they will give their allegiance and their love.

This is why we believe that such a society as the national trust is helping us in efforts as public spirited as they are farsighted, to engender and keep alive the spirit of true patriotism; and this is why we hail any efforts made to protect from harm or desecration any beauty spot or historic site or scene or building for the national use of those who come after.

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It is too late, perhaps, to nationalize the English lakes, though America would probably do it tomorrow. Private ownership has doubtless done much in the past to save the waterfalls and woods and lakesides from harm, but the speculative builder has been at work, and no one has real pleasure as of old now, in sailing on the lower reach of Windermere, and everybody who approaches Waterhead is haunted for ever after by the vision of ugliness that a speculation in brick and mortar has wrought there.

But it is not only the builder who has to be watched. The telephone companies are always willing to run their trunk lines wherever they are invited, and those who invite them are often themselves oblivious of the fact that a telephone communication with their country house can only be obtained by disfiguring the public road or private field with a hideous black-creosoted regiment of telephone poles.

A merchant from the city, who has become accustomed to the sight of such things, purchases a house in some beautiful rural retreat, and though he may only look upon it as a holiday home he will, without any thought of the artist or the tourist, or even of his neighbor's love of an undisfigured countryside, at once give an order to a telephone engineer.

The hotel proprietor is as much to be reckoned with as the speculative builder. "Progress" is his watchword. He has no knowledge and very often as little care for the beauty of natural scenery. Up goes the advertisement board which disfigures a whole landscape. Telephone posts are summoned to his door. It looks so up-to-date to be able to say that, in addition to hot baths, a lift and electric light, "telephone communication has also been established," and though his older customers may assure him that they come to his hotel for rest and to escape these things, he turns a deaf ear, and in the name of "progress" will kill the very goose which lays the golden egg.

Side by side with this permanent disfigurement of many of our country roads and river bridges at the hands of highway surveyors and councillors who prefer iron girders to a good springing arch, our roadside wastes, so lovely if allowed to run wild, are constantly being improved off the face of the earth by the assiduous road-man, and our roadside trees, which ought to be most tenderly treated, are often mercilessly hacked and hewed at the road surveyor's instigation.

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The owner of Stonehenge, if he chose, could blow all the megaliths to atoms tomorrow with dynamite, or might build a wall up to heaven round about them; or, again, the owner of the deeply interesting little thirteenth century "Capeall extra portas" of Kirkstead Abbey can refuse, as he does refuse, to allow any one to purchase the site and repair the building, unless the purchaser, in addition, will buy 1,500 acres of rich fen land along with it.

But Stonehenge and Kirkstead Abbey Chapel have that about them which is more than private property's worth, and the government of the country might legitimately and wisely interfere with private tenure if it were found to be acting to the harm of a nation's well-being and highest interests.

One of the many instances of private ownership and commercial speculation being exercised to the nation's detriment is the destruction of the Cheddar Cliffs—another is the cruel mutilation of the Avon banks.

It is impossible adequately to express in words one's sense of the short-sightedness and unkindness of this conversion of such a noble reach of river scenery into the barren refuse heaps of a naked broken cliff. The national trust and local committees have protested in vain. The men who sailed up the Avon with St. Brandon and his sister Brigha, or sailed down it with Sebastian Cabot, were doubtless helped in their best life's work by visions of the golden woods of Leigh, and the gray-green flood that whispered underneath—and not a man of God nor a merchant-venturer of Bristol since but has been haunted by the fairy scene.

It is all over with the Avon's charm now! The corporation of Bristol has learned from the expert engineer, whose advice it sought, that it would be a comparatively easy thing to drive tunnels through the cliff face and quarry from behind, leaving the Leigh woods still to be a gorgeous leafy cliff screen between the quarries and the river, but knowing this the city fathers are apparently unconcerned, and allow the cruel mischief to proceed without a question.

In this matter of preserving the natural charm of a noble waterway from the hands of the spoiler our Bristol citizens might well have taken a leaf out of the book of the New Yorkers. In conjunction with the New Jersey senate the New York authorities have determined that the quarry proprietor shall no more disfigure the Hudson scenery by eating away the riven cliff at the palisades. No matter how valuable the stone is for building or how easy of access it be for the city builders. It took some years of agitation to move the legislature to the sticking point, but an example of public spirit versus private enterprise in behalf of national sentiment was set by America in saving the beauty of the Hudson, which will, we believe, help communities all the world over, to bring legislative powers to the help of the weak against the mighty.

Mrs. Prune—"I ain't seen your hired girl of late."

Mrs. Pebbles—"No, the poor girl is gone. She tried to boil one of Hiram's celluliod collars and it exploded and we ain't seen her since."—Chicago News.

Chamberlain's Son Financing Deputation to America

Special Correspondence of The Star.

LONDON, October 4, 1905.

Three delegates representing the Postal Federation of Great Britain, of which most of the post office employes of this country are members, will cross the ocean in the course of a week or so to inquire into the conditions under which their fellow-workers in the United States perform their duties.

It is believed by the letter carriers and sorters of London and the big provincial cities that the system of distribution is less laborious in America than it is here, while it is known that American postal employes are better paid than their British fellows, and the forthcoming delegation is to report fully on both subjects.

Elevators are not yet in general use in big blocks of buildings in such places as Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Dublin, and even in London 90 per cent of the big warehouses and offices do not possess such contrivances. In many cases when a letter is to be delivered the postman has to climb 100 to 200 steps. This physical exertion tells severely on the men, many of whom have to retire long before they reach middle age.

When Austen Chamberlain was postmaster general he promised to look into the matter, but his sudden change to the chancellorship of the exchequer caused the grievance to be shelved temporarily. The work which the federation has now undertaken has, it is said, his whole-hearted support, and although it is not publicly stated, it is a fact that he is paying a substantial proportion of the delegates' expenses. The men selected are Herbert C. Jones of London, Walter Wilson, Liverpool, and Alexander Mitchell of Glasgow. They hope to have free access to the distributing departments of the post offices of New York, Boston and Washington. The duration of their stay in the United States is at present indefinite.

Commercial Orthography.

From the New York Mail.

We observed that our contemporary the Times has raised a hornets' nest about its ears by speaking of a "Welsh rarebit." Probably the ink was not dry on the copy of the paper which contained this expression before scores of indignant letters had been penned by the partisans of the Welsh rabbit. Yet in all the dictionaries in which "Welsh rabbit" is found, the form "rarebit" is also given; and the Standard Dictionary frankly admits that "rarebit" is the older spelling. All sorts of fanciful stories are told to explain why a bit of cheese should be called a rabbit. The chances are that "Welsh rabbit" is a whimsical corruption of "Welsh rarebit," and that the people have had enough of the joke and are returning to the older orthography. Certain it is that the restaurant keepers prefer the more serious spelling.

What may be called commercial orthography is often pretty bad. We recall an instance in which "bowl of cream" was printed "bowel" on a city restaurant's bill of fare. Yet commercial nomenclature and commercial spelling have their way in the long run. Take the case of the word "pants." It is not recognized in the dictionaries, and is virtuously excluded by the press, but what is the use? It has the right of way on Broadway. Corporations calling themselves the So-and-So Pants Company are legally incorporated every year.

Commercial usage with regard to words has this point in its justification, that it follows the popular habit. A concern which is organized to manufacture and sell an article of men's wear recognizes that that is its business, and not to educate the people in lexicographical proprieties. Now and then some one arises, to be sure, who undertakes to get a little advertising out of spelling cigar "segar," or using "k's" where the dictionary employs "c's," but that is the exception, not the rule. Commercial orthography is popular orthography.